

ConnectHome – Frequently Asked Questions

What is ConnectHome?

- ConnectHome is a pilot initiative that seeks to accelerate the adoption and utilization of broadband technology by children and families living in HUD-assisted housing.

Why is this pilot necessary?

- As the President has said, “Today, high-speed broadband is not a luxury, it’s a necessity.”
- The Internet is an indispensable tool for accessing educational resources (including applications for college and financial aid), employment opportunities, health care services, and so much more.
 - For example, over 90% of college applications are now submitted online, and more than 80% of job openings with Fortune 500 companies are posted on the web.
- However, our nation is experiencing a digital divide, as the Census Bureau has estimated that 1 out of every 4 American households lack high-speed Internet at home.
- The divide disproportionately impacts certain Americans, such as: those earning less than \$25,000 per year, individuals without high school degrees, and communities of color.
- These are many of the communities that HUD serves.

How does broadband adoption and use align with HUD’s mission?

- Fulfilling HUD’s mission of helping Americans to secure quality and affordable housing means more than just providing our residents with a roof and four walls – it means providing them with the opportunity to build a better future.
- HUD’s 2014-18 Strategic Plan contains Strategic Goal 3: “Using Housing as a Platform to Improve Quality Of Life.”
- This initiative falls directly into the intent of Goal 3. As Secretary Julián Castro has said, “Brainpower is the currency for success in the 21st century.” Broadband technology is a powerful tool that can assist our families and students in obtaining a piece of the American Dream.

How many communities are participating in ConnectHome?

- 28 communities will participate in the pilot for ConnectHome. These communities represent 27 cities and 1 tribal nation. They are:

- Albany, GA; Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Baton Rouge, LA; Boston, MA; Camden, NJ; Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Cleveland, OH; Denver, CO; Durham, NC; Fresno, CA; Kansas City, MO; Little Rock, AR; Los Angeles, CA; Macon, GA; Memphis, TN; Meriden, CT; Nashville, TN; New Orleans, LA; New York, NY; Newark, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Rockford, IL; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Springfield, MA; Tampa, FL; and Washington, DC.
- These participants were selected from the 40 communities that responded to HUD’s [Advance Notice of the Digital Demonstration Project](#) (published in the Federal Register April 3, 2015) with expressions of interest.

Why aren’t more communities able to participate?

- ConnectHome is a proof-of-concept project to test the impact of cross sector collaborators coming together to narrow the digital divide.
- Limited non-government resources necessitated the implementation of ConnectHome in an initial set of pilot communities.

What criteria did HUD utilize in selecting the participating communities?

- During the period following the publication of our [Advance Notice of Digital Opportunity Demonstration](#) in the Federal Register, HUD fielded expressions of interest from a total of 40 communities.
- HUD finalized the list of participating communities by utilizing the following criteria:
 - Formal commitments from both the mayor (or equivalent executive elected official) and executive PHA leadership stating an intent to narrow the digital divide;
 - Formal commitments by these same parties to document and submit data on existing gaps in broadband connectivity within the distinct neighborhoods and demographic groups of their community;
 - A commitment to develop a plan to promote and expand broadband access, adoption, and use within their community;
 - The status of any federal place-based programs currently operating in a particular community, in order to ensure the presence of local support and infrastructure that can be leveraged when implementing ConnectHome;¹

¹ Examples of “place-based” programs that we considered included the following initiatives: Byrne Criminal Justice Intervention; Building Neighborhood Capacity; Choice Neighborhoods; My Brother’s Keeper; Promise Neighborhoods; Promise Zones; Public Safety Enhancement Supplemental Funding; Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2); and STEM, Energy and Economic Development.

- Demonstrable progress towards realizing the vision of the President’s ConnectED initiative, which seeks to ensure that 99 percent of students have access to high-speed broadband in their classrooms by 2018; and
- The presence of more than one Internet service provider (ISPs) in a particular community, to ensure a competitive marketplace that leads to more affordable and higher quality services for households.
- Please note, however, that these criteria were applied with reasonable flexibility to ensure that a diverse set of communities were considered for participation.

Is HUD providing any of its own federal funding as part of ConnectHome?

- No. This demonstration does not commit any new federal funding from HUD and relies only on existing HUD resources.

Will this pilot impact all HUD-assisted housing?

- HUD’s vision is that ConnectHome can impact all forms of HUD-assisted housing, including residents who receive our support through HUD rental assistance.
- However, the exact details of ConnectHome’s work within each participating community will depend on the respective implementation plans created by the stakeholders of each location.
- In addition, we understand that stakeholders may take into consideration logistical burdens. As a result, ConnectHome may concentrate its work in public housing developments, where providing resources such as discounted service and digital literacy training may be easier due to the concentration of residents.

Will residents have to pay for the broadband access provided?

- The exact details of ConnectHome’s work within each participating community will depend on the respective arrangements made between the stakeholders and each ISP. Rates may vary because the specific Internet-Service Provider facilitating discounted access may differ from community to community.
- For example, as of the launch of ConnectHome, ISPs such as Sprint, CenturyLink, and Cox Communications, will provide our residents with free or discounted service at \$10 per month. In other communities, Google will provide home Internet access for free.

How long will these discounted rates last?

- The exact details of broadband service offered to participants within each community will vary based on each of the respective arrangements made between the stakeholders of each location.

How will HUD measure the success of ConnectHome?

- HUD intends to build on the outcomes of the pilot, with the goal of extending the demonstration on a nationwide basis. As a result, HUD will work with entities across the federal government and the broader research community to rigorously measure outcomes associated with our goal of narrowing the broadband digital divide.
- For example, John Horrigan of the Pew Research Center will offer expertise on project evaluation and will advise on metrics, methodologies, and strategies for measuring the success of ConnectHome.
- In addition, national nonprofits EveryoneOn and US Ignite, which are coordinating the implementation in each community, will assist with developing, measuring, and reporting the outcomes of ConnectHome.
- The participating communities and cross-sector stakeholders are expected to participate in any efforts designed to identify and share a playbook of best practices from the demonstration with other HUD-assisted communities.